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**Wednesday, June 13, 2007**

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## Boy may have been beaten

By Gordon Wilczynski  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

A 2-year-old boy suffered serious head injuries and had to undergo emergency surgery Tuesday, Warren police said.

Detective Sgt. Heidi Metz said the child was taken by his 30-year-old father to Oakland General Hospital in Madison Heights on Monday and then was transferred to St. John Hospital in Detroit. She said doctors had to drain fluid from the child's brain.

The boy is listed in critical condition, according to Detective Chad Richardson, officer in charge of the investigation.

Police said they were told by hospital officials that it appeared the child had been beaten.

Police were called by hospital officials at 9:15 p.m. Monday. Such calls are routine when doctors suspect a crime may have been committed.

Detectives on Tuesday searched the parents' house in the 2200 block of Jarvis.

They also sought hospital records to determine the child's condition when he was admitted.

"We're looking for any evidence that would indicate that a crime was committed," said Richardson. "The mother and father have been interviewed and have made no statements that they abused the child."

Neighbors said the father recently lost his job. The mother is pregnant with their third child.

A neighbor, Lisa Hunter, said the family moved in two months ago. She said they live in a rental house.

"He got laid off a month ago and he was always trying to borrow money from people in the neighborhood," said Hunter.

Doctors told police the baby has bruising on his legs, buttocks, back and a small laceration on the forehead.

The mother said the child has had vision problems. She said that as a result of

his vision problems the child often bumped into furniture, police said.

The couple's 4-year-old daughter is in custody of Child Protective Services. The mother, who is 27 years old and formerly of Sterling Heights, is four months pregnant.

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# ClickOnDetroit.com

## Police Investigate 'Tragic' Case Of Child Abuse

POSTED: 11:53 am EDT June 12, 2007

UPDATED: 3:53 pm EDT June 12, 2007

**WARREN, Mich.** -- Police are investigating a case of child abuse that they call tragic.

A 2-year-old boy of Warren is hospitalized with severe head injuries. When the boy's father returned from work Monday night, his girlfriend said their son had been vomiting and had a fever.

When the man went to check on the boy, he was unresponsive, according to reports.

The man rushed the boy to a nearby hospital, where officials transferred him to St. John's Hospital in Detroit.

Doctors at St. John's Hospital performed surgery on the boy to relieve pressure and fluid from his brain.

Hospital officials said the boy is in critical condition.

Police searched the couple's home on Jarvis Street and said they found blood evidence in the boy's bedroom.

An investigation is under way.

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# THE BAY CITY TIMES

## Judge orders Boy Scout leader to face seven counts of child abuse

Wednesday, June 13, 2007

By HELEN LOUNSBURY

TIMES WRITER

STANDISH - A former Boy Scout leader accused of injuring three boys during a scouting overnight faces seven counts of child abuse in Arenac County Circuit Court, a judge ordered this week.

After an evidence hearing last week in District Court, Judge Allen Yenior ordered Steven D. Robinson, 34, of West Branch, to face charges in the higher court.

Robinson, a former police officer, is accused of hurting three Bay area cub scouts, ages 10-11, while staffing a recreational "lock-in" last February at Standish-Sterling Central High School.

Under the most serious charge - second-degree child abuse - prosecutors allege that Robinson broke a boy's leg by kicking him during the overnight. The charge is a four-year felony.

Six added counts against Robinson involve third-degree child abuse allegations. The latter are two-year, high court misdemeanors. In Robinson's case, the accusations include elbowing the boys in the midsection, pushing a victim down a stairway and scalding a child with hot water.

Local and state scouting leaders, including some who attended the February lock-in, have expressed bewilderment at the charges against Robinson. Leaders explained that several safeguards are in place to prevent such abuses.

One safeguard, for example, requires having at least two adults present any time a scout is involved, leaders said.

The Auburn-based Lake Huron Area Boy Scout Council oversees the West Branch cub scout group for which Robinson volunteered. The council's February lock-in is a winter tradition for Bay, Arenac and Ogemaw county scout troops because outdoor camping is less realistic, leaders said.

Robinson remains free on a \$50,000 personal recognizance bond. He's scheduled for arraignment at

9 a.m. June 20 in Arenac Circuit Court.

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## 2-year-old Warren boy critically hurt

June 12, 2007

By DAN CORTEZ

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Warren police are investigating a possible case of child abuse after a 2-year-old boy was found Monday night with critical injuries at his Jarvis Street home.

Police were called to the home about 9 p.m. Monday after the boy was discovered with several bruises around the head. He was taken to St. John Oakland Hospital, where he was in critical condition Tuesday afternoon.

Sgt. Lou Galasso said police were talking to the parents, who have at least one other child. That child did not have any injuries.

The 2-year-old had brain surgery Monday night.

"The next six hours are going to be very critical," Galasso said. "The prognosis is wait and see."

Contact **DAN CORTEZ** at 586-469-1827 or [dcortez@freepress.com](mailto:dcortez@freepress.com).

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## Social worker describes fatal lapses in foster care

He accepted the explanation of Isaac's bruises

June 13, 2007

BY JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Under a grant of immunity from prosecutors, the former social worker in charge of supervising 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge in foster care stammered repeatedly on the witness stand Tuesday as he detailed ways he failed to protect Isaac from abuse.

Karl Troy told a Wayne County Circuit Court jury that he had noticed bruises on the boy Aug. 4, 12 days before Isaac was fatally beaten and burned in a Detroit foster home operated by Charlsie Adams-Rogers.

Troy, then a foster care worker with the private Lula Belle Stewart Center in Detroit, said he did not report suspected abuse to the state's Child Protective Services division as required by law because he accepted as true Adams-Rogers' explanation that a doctor had just seen Isaac and decided there was no abuse.

Adams-Rogers' statement to Troy was false, a doctor who saw the bruises testified, but Troy did not call to verify the foster mother's story.

The doctor, Sumit Fogla of University Family Physicians Clinic in Detroit, testified Monday that Adams-Rogers told him Aug. 4 that Isaac and his sister fought and Isaac bruised easily. Fogla said he told Adams-Rogers to bring Isaac back in two or three days for blood work to confirm the easy bruising. When she failed to keep the appointment, he and his office made a report of suspected abuse, Fogla testified.

Adams-Rogers, 60, is accused of involuntary manslaughter and child abuse for allowing someone to abuse Isaac and his 4-year-old sister in her home. The two children, who had been removed from their parents' care because of environmental neglect, were in Adams-Rogers' three-bedroom home in northwest Detroit for six weeks until Isaac's death Aug. 16.

The manslaughter charge carries up to 15 years in prison; the child abuse charges up to 4 years upon conviction.

Adams-Rogers might testify today, her attorney, Warren Harris, said. The trial before Judge Vera Massey Jones is expected to go to the jury today or Thursday morning.

Troy, who could have faced a misdemeanor charge of failing to report suspected child abuse, admitted he was nervous testifying, which apparently amplified the effects of a speech impediment and frequently prompted the judge to scold him.

At one point, Jones had the jury removed so she could ask Troy if he had trouble hearing questions from Prosecutor Lisa Lindsey.

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## Trial of foster mother charged in Isaac Lethbridge death could wrap up Wednesday

June 12, 2007

By JACK KRESNAK

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

The manslaughter and child abuse trial of a former Detroit foster mother could end by Wednesday, a Wayne County Circuit Court judge said this afternoon.

Judge Vera Massey Jones dismissed the jury hearing the case against Charlsie Adams-Rogers about 12:45 p.m., telling them to return at 9 a.m. Wednesday for what she expects to be the final stage of the case.

Adams-Rogers, 60, is charged with failing to protect two young foster children in her care last year. One of the children, 2-year-old Isaac Lethbridge, was burned and beaten to death by someone in Adams-Rogers' home on Aug. 16, 2006. His 4-year-old sister also was abused, according to Detroit police.

The children's foster care worker, Karl Troy, formerly of the Lula Belle Stewart Center in Detroit, testified today that he saw bruises on Isaac on Aug. 4, 2006, but did not notify Child Protective Services, as required by state law.

Troy, who testified under a grant of immunity from prosecution for failing to report suspected child abuse, said Adams-Rogers had told him that a doctor decided that the bruises were not child abuse. Troy said he accepted that explanation and did not contact the doctor.

Adams-Rogers is charged with involuntary manslaughter in Isaac's death and two child abuse counts involving both children. If convicted, she could be sentenced to up to 15 years in prison on the manslaughter charge and up to four years in prison on the other charges.

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

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June 12, 2007

## Isaac Lethbridge's caseworker: I failed to report toddler's bruises

Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News

**DETROIT** -- Isaac Lethbridge's caseworker saw bruises on the 2-year-old who died last year in foster care, but testified today that he didn't report it to the state, as required by law.

Today's sometimes incoherent testimony by Karl Troy, a licensed social worker, came only after a promise of immunity from Wayne County prosecutors, who agreed not to charge him with failing to report suspected abuse, a misdemeanor that could have sent him to jail for up to 93 days.

The testimony came during the trial of Charlsie Adams-Rogers, Isaac's former foster mother, who is charged with involuntary manslaughter, a 15-year felony. She is accused of failing to protect Isaac from the beating and burns he died from on Aug. 16, 2006. She also faces two counts of child abuse for her treatment of Isaac and his then-4-year-old sister.

Troy, now a substance abuse counselor with a private counseling agency, repeatedly appeared not to understand questions put to him by Wayne County Assistant Prosecutor Lisa Lindsey. Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Vera Massey Jones at one point emptied the courtroom of jurors and slowly repeated a question in a loud voice, asking Troy if he had difficulty hearing or understanding what was said.

The social worker said he'd seen bruises on Isaac during an Aug. 4 meeting, but didn't think he needed to file a complaint form.

Troy told the jury that Isaac had bruise marks under his eyes, on both cheeks and his chin when Adams-Rogers brought him to his office on Aug. 4.

Previous testimony revealed Adams-Rogers had taken Isaac to a clinic earlier that day and had been confronted about the bruises and told doctors might file a complaint.

"She said no, the doctor didn't report (the bruises) because he didn't think it was child abuse," Troy said. "Mrs. Rogers had been appropriate all the time in my case load, so I was going to just follow up with her."

The foster care department at Lula Belle Stewart Center, which licensed Adams-Rogers' home, was closed down by the state following Isaac's death.

The case possibly could go to the jury by Wednesday afternoon.

You can reach Karen Bouffard at (734) 462-2206 or [kbouffard@detnews.com](mailto:kbouffard@detnews.com).

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June 13, 2007

**Detroit**

## Bruises on dead boy were not reported

Case worker, granted immunity, testifies he saw signs of abuse on 2-year old; failed to file a report.

**Karen Bouffard / The Detroit News**

**DETROIT** -- Isaac Lethbridge's case worker saw bruises on the 2-year-old who died last year in foster care, but didn't report it to the state as required by law, according to testimony Tuesday in the involuntary manslaughter trial of the boy's foster mother.

The worker also admitted he never did a background check that would have revealed nine previous abuse complaints against the former Detroit foster mom, Charlsie Adams-Rogers, who faces 15 years in prison on allegations she failed to protect Isaac from abuse. Nobody has been charged with inflicting the multiple injuries and burns that killed the child on Aug. 16, 2006.

The day's proceedings also included testimony from two of Adams-Rogers former foster children.

The testimony from social worker Karl Troy came after a promise of immunity from Wayne County prosecutors, who agreed not to charge him with failing to report suspected abuse.

Troy worked for the Lula Belle Stewart Center, a private agency under contract with the state Department of Human Services. The center's foster care department was closed down by the state following Isaac's death.

The social worker said he'd seen bruises under Isaac's eyes, on both cheeks and on his chin during an Aug. 4 meeting. Previous testimony revealed Adams-Rogers had taken Isaac to a doctor earlier that day, and had been confronted about the bruises and told that doctors might file a complaint.

In other testimony, two sisters, ages 14 and 17, testified Adams-Rogers told them to lie about how many people lived in her home.

"Sometime she would tell us if we didn't lie she wouldn't let us call our mom, or she would take away our home passes (to go home for the weekend)," the 14-year-old said.

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## Former NFL star ordered into bankruptcy to pay child support

By COREY WILLIAMS  
Associated Press Writer

DETROIT (AP) -- Former NFL and Michigan State wide receiver Andre Rison faces a court-ordered bankruptcy to pay more than \$105,000 in back child support and other claims.

Terese Dear, a courtroom deputy for U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Flint, said Tuesday that an order was entered June 6 to put Rison into Chapter 11 bankruptcy.

Rison, a Flint native, has until June 25 to respond to the order before the court proceeds with efforts to recover his assets, Dear said. The Flint Journal reported on the court action Monday.

The former Pro Bowl receiver owes child support, attorney fees and court administrative costs, according to a bankruptcy court petition.

Rison's ex-wife, Tonja Rison of Southfield, is listed as one of the creditors on that petition. Her claim is for more than \$58,000 in child support. An Atlanta law office is claiming another \$46,000 in unpaid legal fees for seeking child support from Rison for two children by a girlfriend.

The Genesee County friend of the court also is after \$400 in administrative fees.

Rison's attorney, David Kallman of Lansing, said Tuesday that he had no comment on the bankruptcy order.

Attorney David Findling was appointed a receiver by Genesee County Circuit Court to go after child support when Andre and Tonja Rison divorced in 1990. He is hoping to be named trustee in the bankruptcy.

Findling said between \$60,000 and \$70,000 in the player's NFL pension already has been liquidated for the Tonja Rison child support case. His office also is going after a \$100,000 severance benefit Rison had in his final NFL contract with the Oakland Raiders.

That money had been claimed from the Raiders by the Internal Revenue Service, but Findling said he sued and got the IRS to release its levy. The Raiders then turned the severance over to a California lawyer to disburse to Rison's creditors.

To Findling's knowledge, Rison has children in Kansas City, Mo., Georgia and Michigan. He said child support is

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owed in all three cases.

Atlanta lawyer Randall Kessler represented Rison's former girlfriend Raycoa Handley. He said his office spent 10 years trying to collect child support for their two children who now are adults.

Kessler said his office was able to collect \$125,597 from Rison's NFL player annuity.

"That just covered child support," Kessler said.

The more than \$46,000 due his office is for legal fees.

Kessler said he is concerned that Rison now owns very little that can be liquidated through bankruptcy.

Rison spent nearly a month in a Georgia jail in 2005 for failing to pay child support.

He entered the NFL in 1989 after playing college football at Michigan State. From 1989 to 2000, he played for seven pro teams. He played five games in the Canadian Football League when his NFL career ended.

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## Local Child Left Hanging in Foster Care System

June 12, 2007 04:21 PM EDT



A little girl is in the hospital battling injuries. She was attacked by a dog after falling out of a window. The child was in foster care at the time and now that family doesn't want her. That little girl is currently at Sparrow Hospital and is being treated for minor

injuries. She's ten years old, but is severely autistic. Child and Family Services say she operates on the level of a two year old. Officials say she suffered years of abuse by her parents, but say now it's the child welfare system that's failing her.

Mary Reed, Child & Family Services Capital Area: "It's failing a lot of kids."

Mary Reed works for Capital Area Child and Family Services. She says, before the accident, the little girl was living in a foster home in Saginaw County. Family refused to keep her and the Department of Human Services couldn't find anyone else to take the girl. Reed says the DHS sent the girl to Ingham County hoping they could help.

Mary Reed: "A child who desperately needs help, a child who has been dropped by much of the system."

Jim Paparella is Executive Director for Child and Family Services. He says it's increasingly difficult to find a family to take a child with special needs.

Jim Paparella, Child & Family Services Capital Area: "We're severely under funded, therefore foster families suffer with the lack of support."

And until that changes, he fears we'll see more cases like this one.

Jim Paparella: "The system is over capacity, under funded and overwhelmed, and as a result, this child is not in a good place and I worry about where she'll end up."

Officials say, unfortunately, the little girl is not a good fit for Angel House, so she's forced to stay in the hospital indefinitely. Child and Family Services says they need more families willing to provide foster care. They're asking anyone interested to call them at 517-882-4000.



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## Another foster care dilemma

Updated: June 12, 2007 08:59 PM EDT

By JOE LaFURGEY

**GRAND RAPIDS --** A Van Buren County couple, who were once licensed foster care parents, will be in a Federal Courtroom Wednesday.

Kurt Amundson and Robert Shafer are charged with making and receiving child pornography.

Authorities won't comment on whether the victim was one of the men's foster children.

It's another black eye for a vital service for children.

There are more than 19,000 children in need of foster care in Michigan. The children are all placed in facilities, but because of the numbers it is not always the best place to serve their needs.

Finding enough homes is a constant challenge. But foster care providers and state regulators disagree on some of the reasons.

When it comes to regulating the state's foster care system, Ricky Holland has become the poster child for reform.

The 7-year-old's 2005 death came at the hands of his foster parents, who were supposed to care for him.

Further investigations found the State's Department of Human Services did not respond to complaints about Ricky's care.

"There's a lot of things that are happening to become a foster parent," said Michael De Bose, a foster parent. "That's a lot of pressure."

And the Holland case has brought about noticeable change for those who are, or want to become foster parents, according to foster care providers.

"It's a challenge, a real challenge," said Sharon Loughridge, D.A. Blodgett executive director.

She said there has been a tremendous amount of regulatory pressure from Lansing to safeguard kids in foster care as of late.

Loughridge blames the Holland case, State Budget cuts and lawsuits. Often times, she said providers have to deal with more than just the Department of Human Services.

There are a dozen other state agencies, advocacy groups and the courts they have to answers to as well.

"So all of these different players are requiring different things from you," Loughridge said.

It's not that agencies do not need the oversight, she said.

"The state needs to really align their policies and practices so that they have a good, consistent way of delivering that oversight," Loughridge said.

But state officials defend the enforcement. When it comes to the difficulty in recruiting foster

families, state officials said it has more to do with the challenges of dealing with children in the system.

Many have behavioral and developmental problems.

"It's not a walk in the park to take on children with challenges," said Janice Trimble, Program manager for Foster Home Licensing.

De Bose, who has been caring for foster children with his wife for 16 years, said all the regulation in the world would not stop their efforts.

"If they posted a government agent outside my door and said we're going to be here everyday to watch what you're doing, I would do this, because I can see the benefits," he said.

If you're interested in becoming a foster care provider, we have a link to the State Department of Human Service on our News Links page.



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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### Teen avoids prison for his role in fatal arson case

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

By Lynn Turner

[lturner@kalamazoogazette.com](mailto:lturner@kalamazoogazette.com) 388-8564

Ritchie Lee Edmonds III, 16, will spend the rest of the year in the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home as part of his sentence for taking part in a Kalamazoo house fire that killed George McCormack last summer, a judge ruled Monday.

Edmonds' uncle, 15-year-old Marcel Dunigan, was sentenced to prison for his role in the same incident.

The difference in the sentencings was prompted by a victim's request for leniency for Edmonds, whom she saw as an essentially good kid who was at the wrong place at the wrong time, caught up in a bad situation. Unlike his uncle, Edmonds testified against his co-defendants -- including his grandmother -- even before he had an agreement with the Kalamazoo County Prosecutor's Office because, he said when asked at various court hearings, "it is the right thing to do."

He also apologized for his actions and did so again Monday.

"My dad said apologizing won't bring back ... (anyone) but will bring comfort to those who forgive," Edmonds said before being sentenced Monday. "I pray George McCormack rests in peace and can forgive me."

Deb Jarchow, owner of the house at 1812 Cameron St. that burned the night of June 17, killing McCormack, who was her boyfriend, and severely injuring her, spoke on Edmonds' behalf when he was initially scheduled to be sentenced May 7 before Kalamazoo County Circuit Judge Philip D. Schaefer.

So did McCormack's sister, Janet McCormack.

Both asked that he not be sent to prison, which was part of the agreement Edmonds made with the prosecutor's office in exchange for pleading guilty to involuntary manslaughter, arson and conspiracy to commit arson.

"I wasn't prepared for that," Schaefer said Monday as Edmonds stood before him.

Instead of sending Edmonds to prison for the six-year period agreed to in the plea agreement, Schaefer ordered him to spend a year at the Kalamazoo County Juvenile Home, where he has been incarcerated for the past 171 days.

Edmonds also was sentenced to wear an electronic tether for a year after being released, be monitored for substance abuse, spend five years on probation and pay victim restitution totaling more than \$303,000.

"If we can save you ... you'll become an asset to the community," Schaefer said. "If ... (you) don't, you know where you're going to go for a long, long time."

Dunigan, who also has been incarcerated at the juvenile home, offered a tepid apology but gave no answer when Schaefer asked why he had targeted Jarchow with taunts and threats for three years before her house was set ablaze.

Jarchow has testified that her relationship with the family across the street changed three years before the blaze from friendly to threatening.



“The week this happened you told me you had a .38 (caliber bullet) for me,” Jarchow said Monday. “You told me I was a dead b----. I was terrified to come out of my house.

“I never did anything to you. Neither did George, except to (try to) find out why you were picking on me.”

Dunigan, prosecutors said, brought a container of lighter fluid to his mother, Teresa Snell, who also is charged with McCormack's murder. Snell is alleged to have given the lighter fluid to Lonnie Warren, who was sentenced June 4 to life in prison for McCormack's murder.

Both Snell and one of her friends, Orlando Edwards, are scheduled for trial and could face life in prison if convicted of murder. Three others were charged with perjury in the case.

Dunigan was given concurrent sentences of six to 15 years in prison and payment of victim restitution for involuntary manslaughter, six to 20 years in prison for arson and six to 20 years in prison for perjury of a prosecutor's investigative subpoena.

He'll turn 16 in July.



## Governor finally takes on the unions

Tuesday, June 12, 2007

Gov. Jennifer Granholm wants the state Legislature to stay in session all summer until it fixes the budget problem. She is calling for new taxes. She also told politicians on Mackinac Island a week ago Friday that the state should take on health-insurance costs for state employees and pension costs for teachers.

That's exciting to hear. For the first time, a Democratic governor seen as captive of the unions and the state's teachers is signaling she's willing to take them on. It's an approach that's long overdue, and we commend her for it.

Health-care and retirement costs have turned into a black hole for companies and the public sector. Employers keep spending more only to get the promise of more double-digit increases the next year. Still, we've seen employers make changes that cause some discomfort for workers and retirees, but don't undo their standard of living. For the money that can be saved, we see this as low-hanging fruit for state government.

The governor deserves kudos for sounding the call to action. She and lawmakers should work hard now to settle next year's spending issues. Tax hikes may be part of the picture -- they shouldn't be the first option -- but tackling retirement and health costs is a must. The Legislature should work with her to make sure it happens.

-- Jackson Citizen Patriot

Wednesday: The Crazy Cowboy

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June 13, 2007

**Editorial**

## Cut state workers' pay in budget crisis

Senate leader properly questions scheduled 4 percent increase

**The Detroit News**

Apparently everything isn't "on the table" when it comes to reforming state government. If everything were, the governor would reconsider the \$110 million in raises that are due to be paid to state employees next year.

But she won't.

"Our focus is on the new contracts that we'll be negotiating in August," says Liz Boyd, Gov. Jennifer Granholm's spokeswoman. Granholm will not ask that current contracts be renegotiated because state workers already have made enough concessions, Boyd says.

That's irresponsible. It's almost as reckless as first negotiating the pay increases when the state's budget crisis was evident and getting worse.

Further tightening of the state's payroll and procedures is needed, and Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, R-Rochester, is right to push the issue. Doing so doesn't suggest that workers aren't doing their jobs well; it reflects the reality of the state's economy. Public employees are subject to the effects of a down economy, too.

Ask Ford or General Motors workers about givebacks and pay cuts. United Auto Workers members reopened their contracts when it was clear that resisting change would mean fewer jobs or none at all. The same should hold true for state government workers.

Unfortunately for taxpayers, Granholm isn't interested in this cost-saving move.

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**Owner of seized flower shop hopes to reopen by end of the week**

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**Community****Senate leader calls for address budget crisis**

LANSING (AP) — Republican Sen Mike Bishop on Monday called for state employees as one of the ways to address Michigan's budget crisis.



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In an interview with Detroit Free Press reporters and editors, Bishop said if he were governor he would seek renegotiating of a 4 percent raise the state's employees are scheduled to receive in the fiscal year that begins Oct. 1.

Bishop said there are other steps that could be taken.

"I'd have an immediate hiring freeze, and I'd have an immediate travel freeze," he said. "Then look at every single insurance policy and every single contract to see if there's a way to save money."

Sandra Parker, president of United Auto Workers Local 6000, which represents thousands of unionized state employees, said workers should not be punished for bad decisions by state policy makers.

"For them to come back now, once again, and have their hands out — to me, that's unconscionable," she said.

Liz Boyd, a spokeswoman for Democratic Gov. Jennifer Granholm, questioned Bishop's comments because he never ordered a Senate vote to reject the pay increase.

"They are pointing fingers at the governor when they have failed to act," Boyd said. "He fails to acknowledge the facts. The governor has asked for concessions, and ... state employees have made concessions."

Boyd said Granholm already has reined in travel, hiring, contracts and the other

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## STATE: Bishop wants to undo pay hike

By Zachary Gorchow  
GANNETT NEWS SERVICE

The leading Republican in state government called Monday for concessions from state employees to address the crisis.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Bishop, in an interview with Free Press reporters and editors, said if he were to approve the renegotiation of the 4% raise the state's 52,000 employees are scheduled to receive in the fiscal year that begins July 1.

Bishop said there are many steps government can take to find immediate savings, in addition to concessions from employees.

"I'd have an immediate hiring freeze, and I'd have an immediate travel freeze," he said. "Then look at every contract and every single contract to see if there's a way to save money."

The Rochester senator's comments -- denounced by Gov. Jennifer Granholm's spokeswoman as ignoring the reality of the state's budget crisis -- come at a critical time.

Bishop, the Democratic-controlled House and Granholm are facing a \$1.8-billion gap between available revenue and spending for the 2007-08 budget year. They also are trying to finalize a new business tax to replace the Siracuse tax which expires Dec. 31.

Dumping the 4% raise for state employees would save an estimated \$109.9 million for fiscal 2007-08.

The Legislature can rescind or reduce a pay increase with two-thirds-majority votes in the House and Senate. Bishop earlier this year to block the pay increase failed to generate enough support, and no vote was held. The state constitution requires that such a vote take place within a certain time frame, which expired in April.

Earlier in Granholm's tenure, employees agreed to concessions, including banked leave time, in which they could use it later in exchange for reduced pay, and worked some days without pay.

Sandra Parker, president of UAW Local 6000, the largest state employee union, said workers should not be asked to make concessions by state policy makers.

"For them to come back now, once again, and have their hands out -- to me, that's unconscionable," she said.

Granholm's press secretary, Liz Boyd, questioned Bishop's comments because he never ordered a Senate vote on the increase.

"They are pointing fingers at the governor when they have failed to act," Boyd said. "He fails to acknowledge that the governor has asked for concessions, and ... state employees have made concessions."

Boyd said she could not say whether reconsidering the raise would be a reasonable move but said state employees have sacrificed considerably.

The administration can seek concessions from state employees at any time and can threaten layoffs if an agreement is not reached.

Boyd said Granholm already has reined in travel, hiring, contracts and the other costs Bishop said he would like to see cut.

A hiring freeze has been in place for most of Granholm's four-plus years in the executive office, and Boyd said she expects it to continue.

contracting process has saved \$562 million.

In the interview, Bishop also remained steadfast against capitulating on how to replace the Single Business business tax.

Still, state leaders face serious time pressure to pass a plan by July 1 to allow the Department of Treasury for the new tax.

The lack of a replacement for the Single Business Tax has alarmed business owners who are struggling with for the coming year without knowing how much tax they will owe.

Senate Republicans have resisted the plan backed by House Democrats and Granholm, largely because of the much relief on the personal property tax, which businesses pay on equipment.

Bishop said the tax relief, while desirable, would force small businesses to pay more because of the manufacture of the personal property tax.

"There is a real hesitation on my part to agree to something that isn't right," he said. "As long as we get it done comfortably we've done the right thing."

Bishop said he had a conference call Monday with leaders of the Detroit automakers and other leading manufacturers. He told them that, while he wants to work with them, he would not rush to judgment on the new tax because it will set the climate for decades.

Granholm, speaking to reporters Monday, said there is urgency to reach agreement and expressed hope for this week, though that comes after previous optimistic appraisals.

"We need to be getting the business tax done, so that businesses can make long-term decisions," she said. "Business is going to come here until they know what their tax liability will be."

Boyd said the plan passed by House Democrats is a good one and noted it was last August when the Legislature controlled by Republicans, approved a voter-led petition to repeal the Single Business Tax.

"A year is not long enough?" she asked.

In other issues, Bishop:

- Discussed the frosty relationship between him and Granholm since the collapse of a purported budget deal. "I think there will always be a trust issue," he said. Further, he criticized Granholm as "detached from the process."

Boyd responded: "Gov. Granholm has been working in her Capitol office week after week and has been talking to every member of Sen. Bishop's caucus in the past few months."

- Questioned the state's economic development efforts, saying the state has invested in manufacturing "to the detriment of other sectors."
- Continued to discuss a possible tax increase in cautious terms. "I can tell you that I have not ruled out the possibility of an increase in this state. I don't know how you can get by with the gap that we have. If the governor's not willing to do what is necessary to balance this budget, we've got to fill that gap somehow."

## STORYCHAT

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Comments by: **yorkark**

Posted: Tue Jun 12, 2007 2:20 pm

Bishop sounds like a typical white man who cannot stand the fact that there is a woman in the top seat. Get over it man the people elected her and she has done her share. The people elected you and you now as majority leader has to show what you can do to lead this house to some some kind of solution to this problem. Secondly, you have to do something to make this proposal acceptable to the Senate. This is no easy job but you asked for now GID HER DONE.

Comments by: **gert**

Posted: Tue Jun 12, 2007 12:41 pm

Looks like Mike Bishop is bucking to run for Governor in '08. I can't think of any other reason why he would be attacking Granholm when even the Republican business community says no more cuts and get the SBT

replacement tax done.

Comments by: **chapmaja**  
Ken, Very well put.

Posted: Tue Jun 12, 2007 10:14 am

Comments by: **ken**

Posted: Tue Jun 12, 2007 8:08 am

Funny, take away the state employees little 4 % raise that was spread out over a year but what about your 36% raise. Are you going to give that up to show a little leadership. State Employees have had more taken away over the years such as pensions, good medical coverage and areas of their contracts get taken away from them by civil service. For people, who only work 114 days a year, Mr. Bishop, you make real good money, get a real pension and medical benefits for life after you are thrown out of office. Why don't you clean your own house first and then say to state employees, can we get some help. Show some leadership and clean up the mess that you and your fellow politicians created by not doing your job. Why don't you show some leadership and do the job that you were elected to do, lead the state, and get the job done. SBT replaced yet?

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